

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 FPC-01 H-01 INR-07
INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04 USIA-06
OES-06 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 PA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3306

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: SENV, CA

SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS INCREASED RISK OF BEAUFORT SEA

BLOW-OUTS

REF: OTTAWA 3219

1. TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL ON APRIL 29 PUBLISHED STORY HEADLINED "REPORT ON BEAUFORT BLOW-OUTS INCREASES RISK ESTIMATES". ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT "A STILL SECRET GOVERNMENT REPORT ESTIMATES THAT THERE IS ONE CHANCE IN 300 OF A BLOW-OUT OCCURRING IN THE BEAUFORT SEA DURING AN EXPLORATORY DRILLING FOR OIL AND GAS". THE REPORT IS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN PREPARED BY ENVIRONMENT CANADA TO BE USED BY THE CABINET IN TRYING TO DECIDE ABOUT PROPOSED 1977 OFFSHORE DRILLING. IT PLACES THE RISK OF A BLOW-OUT AT A MUCH HIGHER LEVEL THAN PRIOR GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY ESTIMATES. IT FOCUSES SPECIFICALLY ON THE BEAUFORT SEA REGION AND RELATES TO HYDROCARBONS.

2. ARTICLE CONCLUDED BY REPORTING THAT DOME IS SUGGESTING 11 DRILLING SITES FOR 1977 AND IS HOPING FOR CABINET
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APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE FOR ITS COMPLETE FIVE-YEAR DRILLING PROGRAM. OTHER REPORTS, HOWEVER, INDICATE THAT GOC IS CONSIDERING ONLY FIVE DRILLING SITES.

3. COMMENT: ENVIRONMENT CANADA SOURCES CLAIM THAT STORY IS BASED ON A YET-TO-BE-COMPLETED CONSULTANT'S REPORT TO THAT DEPARTMENT. SOURCES POINT OUT THAT THE ONE IN 300

CHANCE IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH OUTER LIMITS OF PROBABILITY FOR BLOW-OUT. THESE HAVE RANGED FROM ONE IN 100 TO ONE IN 100,000 WITH GENERAL CONSENSUS THAT A REALISTIC RANGE IS 1 IN 1,000 TO 1 IN 10,000.

4. OPPONENTS OF BEAUFORT SEA DRILLING HAVE OBVIOUSLY BEEN HEARTENED BY NORTH SEA BLOW-OUT AND PRESUMABLY THIS STORY HAS BEEN LEAKED TO PRESS IN EFFORT TO DELAY GOC DECISION.

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5. PM TRUDEAU WAS ASKED ABOUT DRILLING PROGRAM IN HIS APRIL 28 PRESS CONFERENCE; HIS RESPONSE WAS GENERAL, STRESSING "CONCERN" AND LIMITS PLACED ON DRILLING BY CABINET. HE CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY STATING: "IT IS NOT A FOREGONE CONCLUSION THAT DRILLING SHOULD GO ON IN THE BEAUFORT SEA." NEVERTHELESS, WHILE CABINET CONSIDERATION OF DRILLING AUTHORITY HAS BEEN POSTPONED (REFTEL), EMBASSY DOUBTS THAT PROGRAM WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY CHANGED. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH ENERGY, MINES AND RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT CANADA OFFICIALS, EMBOFFS GIVEN IMPRESSION THAT GOC DOES NOT CONSIDER NORTH SEA AND BEAUFORT SEA SITUATIONS AS BEING PRECISELY PARALLEL AND THAT RISK OF BLOWOUT IS NOT VIEWED AS BEING HIGH ENOUGH TO WARRANT CANCELLATION OF DRILLING PROGRAM. STRICTER SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL OF DRILLING OPERATIONS MAY BE CALLED FOR, HOWEVER. ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, OFFSHORE DRILLING, ALLEGATIONS, OIL SPILLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 29-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decapton Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Executive Order: N/A
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977044/aaaaaddp.tel
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To: STATE
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